LOS ANGELES FIRE DEPARTMENT

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

DOROTHY MAE ORDINANCE
No. 158,963

Ordinance No. 158,963 - Section 91.8604(e) (Dorothy Mae Ordinance), effective June 20, 1984, requires all pre-1943 residential buildings of R-1, Occupancy, three or more stories in height, to meet certain specified retroactive fire safety requirements.

The ordinance contains code requirements in the areas of building, electrical, fire and plumbing. In order to clarify several of the requirements and to provide interpretations to some of the most commonly asked questions, the following information is provided to insure consistent application of the ordinance requirements:

BUILDING INFORMATION

1. All buildings affected by this ordinance are required to be in compliance with the "Ponet" Ordinance [91.8604(c)].

2. Building plans which show compliance with the ordinance are required to be submitted to the Building Plan Check Section in the Conservation Bureau (Special Projects Division) and approved prior to obtaining a building permit and starting construction. Notes should be included on the building plans stating that separate plans for electrical and fire sprinkler designs are being submitted to show compliance with the requirements for these areas.

3. Self-closing devices required on apartment or guest room doors openings into an interior stairway, hallway or exit shall be U. L. listed.

4. If a stairshaft door in the hold open position interferes with another frequently used door opening into the exit systems, one of the doors shall be relocated. The location of doors and direction of opening shall be shown on the building plans.

5. All required stairshaft, cut-off and area separation doors shall be equipped with approved self-closing devices and electrically operated hold-open devices designed to release the door by the activation of smoke detectors. (See Electrical Information for location).

6. For buildings located in Fire Districts 1 or 2, every story or basement level having a floor surface elevation more than four feet lower than the highest elevation of the floor, landing, or tread of any required exit from that story or basement shall be fully sprinklered.

7. Doors opening from an existing basement shall comply with the following requirements:

    a. Basement doors opening into an open stairway leading to the first floor corridor shall be of one-hour fire-rated assembly and require an approved self closer.

        Existing built up doors installed under the “Ponet Square” Ordinance shall be considered as complying with the fire rating requirement.

    b. Doors opening into stair shafts from basements shall require both a self-closer and a smoke detector activated hold-open device.

    c. The basement doors as described above, in “7a” and “b”, may also serve as a barrier to prevent building occupants from continuing down through a stairway and exiting into the basement. Such barrier is required per 91.3309(e).

    d. When an existing stairway configuration prohibits the installation of a basement door at the first floor, a self-closing door per Section 91.8604(e)4 must be installed at the basement end of the stairway and protected with a sprinkler on the basement side. An approved barrier shall then be provided at the first floor.

8. Existing elevator shafts extending into the basement shall have a sprinkler head mounted over the basement level elevator door.

9. “Cut-off” wall systems installed under the “Ponet Square” ordinance in lieu of stair shaft enclosures may continue to be maintained provided passage doors conform to all the requirements as for doors opening into stair shaft enclosures.

10. Both new and existing stair shafts, and existing cut-off wall systems may exit into an existing first floor corridor without the requirement for continuing the protected exit enclosure to the exterior of the building.

PLUMBING INFORMATION

1. Fire sprinkler plans shall be submitted to the Mechanical Plan Check Section and approved prior to obtaining a permit and starting construction.

2. The water supply to the required sprinkler system may be taken from the domestic water system supplying the building with the following conditions:

    a. The point of connection is made between the water meter and the building shut-off valve.

    b. The domestic water service and the water meter are of adequate size to supply both the domestic water and the fire sprinkler demand.

3. The domestic water shall be protected from the Fire Department inlet connection with an approved double check valve assembly or a factory assembled and listed detector check valve assembly. A Fire Department inlet connection is required when the total number of sprinklers in the building exceed 20.

4. Building systems shall be hydraulically calculated in accordance with NFPA-13 1980 Edition. Corridor sprinklers may be considered in a separate fire area from those located in the rooms off the corridors of stairs if the doors are equipped with self-closing devices. When the design area under consideration involves a single row of sprinklers in the corridor, the maximum number of sprinklers that need be calculated is five (5).

    Where a building is not fully fire sprinklered and where systems utilizing sprinklers with orifice size smaller than nominal 1/2 inch, sprinklers shall discharge a minimum flow based on the formula 0.785 D2 x d, where D is the distance between sprinklers and d is the density [see figure 2-2.1(b) of NFPA-13, 1980 Edition for density curves].

    Sprinklers required to be installed over the doors leading into the corridors or stairs shall discharge water equivalent to a 1/2 inch orifice head.

5. All sprinkler heads used to comply with this ordinance shall be listed residential type or quick response type and be rated for the lowest operating temperature available (i.e., 135°F, 145° F, etc.), except that 212°F heads may be used under a skylight.

6. A single flow switch may be used for the entire building sprinkler system. (See Electrical Information for location and number of alarm bells.)

    Alarm bells required by these provisions shall be in lieu of the Plumbing Code required sprinkler alarm bell.

7. Existing sprinkler heads that are not of the listed quick response or residential type rated at the lowest temperature range shall be changed.

8. Each fire sprinkler control valve shall be provided with a tamper switch. The tamper switch shall be connected to the same fire control panel supplying the water flow alarm switch.

9. Polybutylene pipe may be used for fire sprinkler piping provided:

    a. It is used only for horizontal piping on the same floor without penetrating into any other floor.

    b. The polybutylene piping has been approved under a General Approval by the Mechanical Testing Laboratory.

    c. Polybutylene piping is installed in accordance with the installation instruction on the General Approval and the conditions of its listing.

10. All exit corridors, exits and stairways on every floor and basement level in the building are required to be sprinklered.

    Sprinklers may be omitted in basement level exit ways provided no residential units are located at these levels.

    Basements opening into stair shafts or first floor corridors shall require at least one fire sprinkler mounted in the basement as required below in 11.

11. The sprinkler head required to be located inside the room over the door shall be located in such a manner as to provide maximum coverage for the door and the room or the interior hallway.

    The use of sidewall sprinklers for this purpose is permitted provided that the room does not have interior hallways or vestibules and that unobstructed coverage is provided for the room and the door.

    Sidewall sprinkler located on the wall adjacent to the door which will provide coverage for the door and the interior hallway or vestibule may be used.

12. Closets or storage areas adjacent to, but without direct openings into corridors or stair shafts need not be sprinklered.

ELECTRICAL INFORMATION

1. Electrical plans showing compliance with the requirements of this ordinance are required to be submitted to the Electrical Plan Check Section and approved prior to obtaining a permit and starting construction.

   Fire Department approval of electrical plans showing the alarm bells, trouble bell and control panel location is required prior to Electrical Plan Check Approval.

2. Each building shall be equipped with a minimum single zone fire alarm control panel permitting connection of a minimum of two alarm bells, speakers or horns, and tamper switch, except where a greater number of bells are required. Equipment shall be listed for the purpose. The approved location for the fire alarm panel shall be the entry lobby.

3. In the building, an alarm shall automatically be sounded in the public areas of the building. (See Item 5 below for location and number of bells or horns necessary).

4. A tamper switch shall be wired into the fire alarm control panel and shall sound a trouble bell at a location designated by the Fire Department.

5. Bells, speakers or horns are required to be installed in the exit corridor adjacent to an exit stairway on each floor. Bells, speakers or horns located on adjacent floors are required to be adjacent to alternate stairways.

   EXCEPTION: If the traveled distance between exit stairways is less than 150 feet, one bell may serve two adjacent floors.

6. The electrical wiring for the bell circuit, tamper switch and flow switch and power supply requirements for the control panel are required to comply with Article 760 of the NEC and amended by Section 93.0606 of the L.A.M.C.

7. If a building has an existing operational fire alarm system that can accept connection of the required fire alarm devices and the system, after testing, performs as required, an additional (new) fire control panel need not be installed.

8. A smoke detector and/or door holding device may be energized from any 120 volt house source, if the branch circuit is not overloaded and is not controlled by a local switch outside of the electrical panel.

9. Smoke detectors that are intended to activate the operation of stair shaft, cut-off and area separation doors shall •be located on the ceiling or within 12” of the ceiling if wall mounted and no more than 5 feet away from each side of the door.

   EXCEPTION: Existing cut-off wall doors, when located within 16 feet of each other, may be controlled by one smoke detector.

10. Smoke detectors used for door holder release service shall be listed for such use by a Testing Laboratory approved by the Department and by the California State Fire Marshal's office.

    The detectors are not required to activate the sounding of an alarm in the building and are not required to be connected to the fire alarm system.

11. If an electric fire pump is required to supply the necessary pressure to the sprinkler system, such as in high-rise buildings, the pump is not required to be connected to a standby power source. The pump, controller and wiring shall be listed for this purpose and shall comply with NFPA 20-FIRE PUMPS.

    This memorandum outlines certain material requirements and methods of construction applicable to the Dorothy Mae Ordinance, and is intended to provide for easier understanding and compliance.

    If other methods, materials or requirements will provide equivalent safety and still meet the intent of the ordinance; the Department will review these for approval as they apply to a particular project.

91.8604(c)
FIRE PROTECTION STANDARDS FOR EXISTING GROUP "R" OCCUPANCIES

(c) **Residential Buildings.**

1. Purpose. The purpose of this subsection is to provide a reasonable degree of fire safety for persons living and sleeping in apartment houses, hotels, apartment hotels, and in buildings housing Group 1, Division 2 Occupancies by requiring alterations to such existing buildings which do not conform to the minimum exiting, shaft enclosure and corridor protection requirements of this code.

2. Scope. The provisions of this subsection apply to all existing buildings more than two stories in height which contain Group R, Division 1 and Group 1, Division 2 Occupancies. The provisions of this subsection shall not authorize the modification of existing buildings or portions thereof which provide a greater degree of protection against fire than the minimum requirements established by this subsection.

3. Corridor walls and openings. The walls of every public corridor shall be protected by one-hour fire-resistive construction, provided however, that existing walls constructed of wood lath and plaster and which are in good condition, will be acceptable in lieu thereof.

   Transoms and openings other than doors from public corridors to guest rooms and dwelling units shall be closed and solidly covered with material

which will provide the degree of fire resistiveness as shall be provided by adjacent corridor walls.

All door openings from public corridors to guest rooms and dwelling units shall provide the same degree of fire resistiveness as shall be provided by adjacent corridor walls.

EXCEPTION: Door openings from public corridors to guest rooms and dwelling units may have 20-minute protection, provided:

A. All stairways, hallways, exit ways and storage or closet areas adjacent thereto are sprinklered, and

B. A sprinkler head is placed inside each unit adjacent to each door opening from the public corridor to the guest room or dwelling unit, and

C. An approved self-closing device is installed on each door opening from the public corridor into the guest room or dwelling unit.

4. Shaft enclosures. All stairwells shall be enclosed in approved shaft enclosures, provided however, that existing enclosure walls constructed of wood lath and plaster which are in good condition will be accepted in lieu of approved shaft wall construction.

EXCEPTION: In buildings erected prior to January 1, 1943, stair shaft enclosures may be omitted if the building is sprinklered throughout and the sprinkler system is interconnected to the alarm system required under Subsection (e) of Section 91.8604 of the Los Angeles Municipal Code.